

Madam Speaker, I rise in recognition of the 62<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Israel's independence. I have always been deeply moved by the duality of Israel's independence celebration, at once both sorrowful and triumphant.

On one day – Yom Hazikaron, Israel's Memorial Day – Israel honors those who gave their lives defending their families, their neighbors, their communities, their people, and their country. Israel today recognizes even those who died before the state was officially declared in 1948. This year Israel honors 22,684 soldiers killed in the line of duty, and another 1,750 civilian victims of terrorism. These brave men and women died in service to the foundational belief of Israel: that in their ancient homeland the Jewish people can live in freedom.

But by the dawn of the morning following Yom Hazikaron, Israel exchanges tears of sadness for tears of joy, celebrating their official day of independence – the declaration of the State of Israel by David Ben Gurion in 1948. I know of no other country that combines such deep sadness with such unrelenting delight.

For 62 years now Israel has stood as a vibrant democracy and a symbol of hope for millions of people around the world. For 62 years Israel has modeled a society where determination and passion, and an emphasis on social progress and education, can build a productive nation.

Madam Speaker, I have been to Israel 14 times as a Member of Congress, and every time I go I encounter ordinary citizens and government officials alike who are genuinely dedicated to living up to the ideals of Israel's independence. I am always impressed by the Israelis' intense desire to persevere. Israel deserves to be secure and prosperous, to live in peace with its neighbors, and to live free from fear and violence.

I look forward to returning to Israel in the near future, and on congratulating Israel again on its 63rd birthday . . . and its 64th, and 65th, and all the years after that.

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